



CLIMATOLOGICAL OBSERVERS NETWORK

England & Wales

NEWSLETTER 1998

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Introduction

As you may be aware there have been further staff changes since the last Newsheet - John Pawley has now become the Rainfall manager following the retirement of Rick Small. This leaves me as the sole climatological manager ! Although I do have some excellent administrative support from Anne Norris and Dave Croxall it does get a bit busy sometimes but we will endeavour to respond to any requests from you as soon as possible.

I've now met quite a lot of you in the course of my inspection travels - my impressions have been very favourable and it has been a very pleasant experience meeting you all.

The Newsletter contains various items including the forthcoming Climatological Observers Courses, awards of MBEs and awards for long (station) service and 'Top Ten' awards to observers for excellent returns during 1997.

Thankyou for all the very good work you are doing and may our association with you be long and enjoyable.

Ian Brownston

Ian Brownston
Climate Stations Manager

Raingauge Warning . . . ! !

During 1997 a pupil at a school in Scotland injured a hand on the rim of a 5" raingauge. The injury was serious enough for the pupil to require several stitches and an overnight stay in hospital.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that meteorological equipment should always be handled with care. A raingauge has a sharp edge to the funnel, often razor sharp when new. Inside the gauge is the spout that has a knifelike point and both the collecting bottle and rain measure are made of glass.

So please be careful !

If gauges are in areas where children are present then it may be wise to consider some form of post and wire fence around the gauge. If you want any further advice then please don't hesitate to contact any of the staff at HQ at Bracknell.

Photographs

We are thinking of producing a Met Office calendar for 1999 using weather related photographs as the main theme. If there are any budding Lord Lichfields amongst you who wish to submit photographs for possible inclusion in the calendar then we would be more than happy to receive them - all photos will be returned.

Raingauge Rumour

It is hoped to introduce in the future a rust and peat bog proof stainless steel raingauge.

It has been designed as a cheaper and longer lasting replacement for the current copper models. Before they start popping up all over the country a test of both their accuracy and durability has to be carried out. One of the sites it is planned to be tested at, in Scotland, is at the Met Office at Eskdalemuir where it will be compared against a standard Met Office design raingauge.

The current design does not incorporate a 'splay base' but has parallel sides and a dished foot to keep it firm and vertical in the ground, and in addition the material thickness has been increased to give it added strength (to reduce impact damage from lawn mowers etc.)

Archives

Those of you who may have had contact with Mick Wood, either by meeting him on a visit to the Meteorological Office Archives during a Climatological Observers course, or via the National Meteorological Library may like to know that he finally put his feet up and retired on 16 January - his place has been taken by Ian MacGregor, who again some of you who have been on a Climatological Observers course in the last year or so may remember as one of your instructors at the College or the Field Study Centre at Preston Montford.

Climatological Observers Courses 1998/1999

A trawl for the Climatological Observers courses at the Met Office College is now underway - it would be appreciated if the application forms could be returned by 14th August to allow for arrangements to be made for the first course at the end of September. It would also be appreciated if everyone did not make a mad rush for the initial courses ! The dates for the current academic year are :-

29 Sep	to	2 Oct 1998
1 Dec	to	4 Dec 1998
9 Feb	to	12 Feb 1999
2 Mar	to	5 Mar 1999
4 May	to	7 May 1999

There are now two new instructors at the College (replacing Ian MacGregor and Liz Carlton) who are Margaret Rudd and Claire Pluck.

For those of you at Field Study Centres your Studies Co-ordinator will be contacted soon by Sue Townsend at Preston Montford to ask for nominations for the course held at Preston Montford on 2nd/3rd September 1998.

Did you see ? ? ?

I was inspecting the climatological station at Preston (Moor Park) on the morning of Wednesday 10th September 1997 and noticed a rather spectacular sky inasmuch that the otherwise clear of low and medium level cloud sky was filled with more persistent aircraft cirrus condensation trails than I have ever seen in my life. This was also noted by our 'hawkeyed' climatological observer in Halesowen, near Birmingham, at 0530 UTC who has since written in, with a photo of the condensation trails especially to let us know about the phenomena.

The sky remained unchanged for most of the morning in Preston but was apparently beginning to dissipate slowly further south by mid-morning. The meteorological pattern at the time was that of high pressure covering the UK, although this was beginning to decline at the time.

Did anyone else notice the remarkable sky that morning ?

MBE Awards

It was a great pleasure to see **Mr John Powell** of Penmaen (Gower) receive an MBE in the June 1997 Birthday Honours List and two further MBEs to climatological observers in the 1998 New Year's Honours this January. The two to receive the awards were **Cedric Roberts** of Halesowen in the West Midlands, and **Howard Martin** of Ashover near Chesterfield. Having spoken to them since they are naturally very pleased and privileged, but of course the local media always get to know and for a short while both were the centre of attention for some while - see the next article on Cedric - he's still smiling about the incident !

Oh no . . . not again !

As mentioned in the previous item on the award of MBE's to climatological observers, Cedric Roberts did not have a good March this year ! Once the news had broken in the New Year of Cedric's honour he was rather inundated by the local media. He was showing a member of the Press the meteorological instruments in his garden when the phone rang inside his house - in his haste to answer what was probably either another media enquiry or more congratulations he managed to rupture his Achilles tendon ! He then went to hospital to get his leg plastered

However, at the beginning of March off came the plaster - on the 20th March it's down to the Palace for the investiture. So far so good. Up steps Cedric to receive his MBE from HRH Prince Charles (plus a little chat) - protocol requires that after receiving one's award that you step back, bow, turn right, and leave. At this point he felt a dull pop in the same heel. Luckily a naval officer, who happened to be a surgeon, was on investiture duty and was able to attend to a hobbling Cedric. Luckily, he diagnosed torn scar tissue but advised him not to walk - so Cedric ended up walking into the Palace, and being wheeled out. All in all a very enjoyable day, albeit an eventful one - Cedric returned back in plaster

Top Ten Awards

The following stations have received a book award for being, in the opinion of the Quality Control team, the top ten stations in England and Wales for submitting consistently good, and timely, returns during 1997. I've listed them below :

Bradford (Lister Park)	Chris Russell
Coton-in-the-Elms	Michael Deakin
Carlton-in-Cleveland	Mike Cinderey
Exmouth	Sandy Satterly
Hayling Island	Barry Jefferies
Jersey - St. Helier	Sid Rogers
Saron	Mike Stedham
Ryhill	Michael Pears
South Raynham	Mr N. Joice
Westgate	John Say

We recognise that many stations submit very good returns over a long period of years, so we have adopted the policy of not awarding a book to the same station the following year although the high quality of returns from the station may have been identical. This allows those of you who just missed out to be considered as front runners for next years award.

Long Service Awards

<i>Station</i>	<i>Opened</i>	<i>Years</i>
<i>Denver</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Hemyock</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>High Beach</i>	<i>1978</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Downside Abbey</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Moel Cynnedd</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Morley St. Botolph</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Nettlecombe & Birds Hill</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Penmaen</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Shirburn</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Cwmystwyth</i>	<i>1958</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Newtown Linford</i>	<i>1958</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Alice Holt</i>	<i>1948</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Cirencester</i>	<i>1948</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Lacock</i>	<i>1948</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Newport</i>	<i>1928</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Bexhill</i>	<i>1908</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Bradford (Lister Park)</i>	<i>1908</i>	<i>90</i>
<i>Woburn</i>	<i>1898</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Lowestoft</i>	<i>1878</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Rothamsted</i>	<i>1878</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Bidston</i>	<i>1873</i>	<i>125</i>

There are also eighteen stations due to receive certificates for ten years service in addition to those listed above - don't forget the above 'Opened' dates refer to the years in which data was first received by the Met Office - you may well have been open longer than the above dates ! The certificates will be presented during the coming inspection season by the relevant inspector in the area.

New / Closed stations

Several new climatological stations have been opened in the last twelve months with, sadly, several closures as well. The stations opened were :

Bridgefoot	Nr Workington, Cumbria
Chillingham Barns	Nr Alnwick, Northumberland (upgraded from a rainfall only station)
Faversham	Kent (re-opened)
Gringley-on-the-Hill	Nr Retford, Nottinghamshire
Stradbroke	Nr Eye, Suffolk
Tavistock	Devon
Upper Lambourn	Berkshire
Wych Cross	Nr Forest Row, East Sussex

and stations closing :

Bowes	Nr Barnard Castle, Co. Durham
Brooksby Hall	Nr Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire
Clyst Honiton	Nr Exeter, Devon
Crossway	Nr Abergavenny, Gwent
Delamere Forest	Cheshire
Didbrook Fields	Nr Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
Driby	Nr Alford, Lincolnshire
Greysouthern	Nr Workington, Cumbria
Pen-y-Ffridd	Nr Caernarfon, Gwynedd
Sandown	Isle of Wight
Silverstone	Northamptonshire
West Retford	Nottinghamshire

Inspection Season

Yes, upon us once again for those of you last visited in 1995! Some stations due for inspection this year in South Wales will notice a new face, in the form of Dave Hampton (based at the Port Met Office in Cardiff) who has been recruited (he also did some inspections during the 1997/98 season as well) to conduct inspections for us during our temporary staff shortage.

Potential Stations

By the time you read this newsletter the inspection season will be underway. Inspectors will be in various areas on inspection trips this summer and will be visiting quite a lot of potential stations during those months - quite a lot are scattered around in Wales and the Welsh border region, some in Cumbria and the NW of England, Humberside and Lincolnshire, so hopefully we will be replacing some of the closed stations and also filling in 'holes' in the network at the same time.

Met O. Stores move

If some of you have experienced a delay in receiving replacement instruments it was due to a move to new premises of our Stores department - this took up most of the month of March to move everything, lock, stock, and barrel to premises fairly close to the original site, but nevertheless a mammoth logistic move - so please bear with us if you asked us for new instruments but experienced a slightly longer delay than normal. Talking of our Stores, those of you who may have had contact with John Lomas, the Stores manager, (and knowledgeable master of all things technical) has just retired after eighteen years in charge of the section. His place has been taken by Richard Pratt, recently arrived from Cardiff (Rhoose) Airport.

Quality Control staff

There are a couple of new faces in Quality Control, namely Harry Marchant, Julian Lurie and George Hood.

George will be based in the 'rainfall room', with Harry and Julian checking 3208B and DISC returns along with Dave Brown and Jan Lewandowski.

The areas of responsibility have been adjusted slightly with the addition of Julian Lurie to the team, and are summarised as follows :-

Harry - south of the line Norfolk/Suffolk border, Cambridgeshire, and counties south of (roughly) a straight line across to the Bristol Channel.

Jan - north of the above mentioned line to a line from the Humber estuary to the River Mersey.

Julian - north of the Humber/Mersey line to the Scottish border.

Dave - Northern Ireland, plus responsibility for the issue of the DISC (Data Input System for Climatological Stations) disk program - a user friendly alternative to the 3208B to interested stations.

Weather Diary - Form 3208B

As mentioned in a Newsletter a few years ago it is easy to forget the reverse side of the 3208B - the weather diary is a very important element of the climatological history of a station. It also serves as a useful guide when checking for possible errors on the return.

If you are able to keep a weather diary you can use either Beaufort letters, plain language or a mixture of both. Details of Beaufort letters can be found in the *Observers Handbook*. It is appreciated that some observers are unable to complete a weather diary due to other commitments - in such cases even a limited diary would be very much appreciated. To limit the amount of writing involved the diary should be confined to weather phenomena such as thunderstorms, strong winds, hail, snow, fog, rain or any other event considered to be worthy of note. Of particular benefit are details of intensities and commencement/cessation times of events, recorded in GMT.

The rule of thumb is, if you think the event is significant then we will as well !

A Message from Quality Control to all our Voluntary Observers.

from Anne Tunnicliff - Quality Control Team Leader

For the last few years now you have been promised an improvement in the style of the printouts of your daily reports that we send you. We had hoped to give you a single sheet - one to imitate closely the form that many of you send us - instead of the two or three that we produce at the moment.

This promise was based on having flexibility with a new database for climatological data called MIDAS - the Met Office Integrated Data Archive System. As seems often to be the case, this proved to be more intricate, time consuming, and mind boggling than originally predicted.

So our merry - well, they were merry - band of programmers who had to handle all of this for us - had slightly more pressing matters to attend to - like handling data in the first place! Some are still battling on. Some have been taken away to attend to other projects such as the 'Year 2000'.

Meanwhile the improvements that we had hoped for are still in the queue but at least the summaries are back and the rain has stopped - for the moment, and the sun is shining again, so all things are possible!

Jan, Dave, Harry and Julian have had to cope with checking everything twice - on the new and the old system - while we convince ourselves to let go of the old. So thanks to them for staying the course and to those of you who have pointed out inconsistencies on your printouts. It helped us a lot.

Meanwhile - a plea. We look forward to receiving your forms and diskettes regularly at the beginning of each month. With everything received on time - they can be done and dusted so much quicker and better

Request for articles for the next Newsletter

If you have a pet theory, or would like to tell your fellow observers about your station, or have any amusing anecdotes or experiences, why not send them to me! I would also be particularly keen to receive articles from people who use their climate readings in the pursuit of their interests . . e.g. sailors. gardeners, aviators etc.

Please feel free to send in any articles to reach me by the end of this year.

